

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Mike's top priority is promoting policies that support a healthy economy and job creation. Since being elected to Congress, Mike has been a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee because of the important role the committee plays in our economy.

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Additional resources:

- House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
- Maine Department of Transportation
- U.S. Department of Transportation

Work on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

From his position on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (T&I Committee), Mike has fought for substantial transportation funding increases in Maine to help boost our economy and improve safety for our citizens. The significant increases Mike was able to secure for our state continues to generate jobs for thousands of Mainers. It is also providing critical improvements to existing highways and the construction of new roads and bridges, and helping to maximize transportation efficiency. All of these combined will make our state's businesses more competitive in the long term. Safe and efficient transportation is vital to our nation's economy, and especially to Maine's economy which depends heavily on tourism and natural resource-based industries. Mike believes that investment in transportation means investment in our jobs and our livelihoods.

As a leading member of the T&I Committee's Subcommittee on Economic Development, Mike crafted and passed his bill in the House to create a Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) on October 4th, 2007. His bill was later passed into law as a part of the Farm Bill in the summer of 2008. To learn about the NBRC, [click here](#).

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Transportation Funding

As Chair of the Appropriations Committee in the Maine Senate, Mike transferred significant general fund dollars to transportation, to be sure that we were making a strong investment each year. As a Member of Congress, he has continued to focus on transportation funding and has made it a top priority. Federal funding through multi-year surface transportation authorizations generate thousands of jobs in Maine.

SAFETEA-LU

On August 10, 2005, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act - A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed into law. This act reauthorized and updated federal surface transportation programs through the end of fiscal year 2009. As a member of the T&I Committee, Mike helped to pass this bill, which authorized a substantial increase in funding for Maine's highways and high priority projects. It authorized \$950 million for Maine highways between 2005 and 2009, representing an average increase of about 30% - or \$44 million - per year from the previous authorized amount. Additionally, Mike was able to secure \$48.8 million in funding for high need projects in the Second Congressional District alone. This compares to \$45 million for such projects for the entire state in the last authorization bill in 1998.

New Multi-year Transportation Bill

While the 2005 bill contained some important policy and funding updates, the final product was ultimately diluted due to the administration's steadfast resistance to adequately funding program levels at what its own Department of Transportation recommended. Because of this, many states have not been able to fund a number of important projects. Recognizing that more is needed to provide our nation with safe and efficient transportation, Mike is currently working with his colleagues on the Committee to draft a new multi-year highway reauthorization that will address current needs and allow our states to fund their priorities.

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Working to Solve the Truck Weight Problem in Maine

For many years now, there has been a mismatch between federal and state truck weight limits in Maine. Mike has been working to fix this discrepancy and correct the problems that it has caused.

Federal laws generally require that vehicles may not exceed 80,000 pounds on federal interstate roads. States may set their own rules on state maintained roads, and Maine has a 100,000 pound limit on its roads. This means that trucks weighing between 80,000 and 100,000 pounds must be diverted off of the Interstate to travel through much of Maine.

Mike strongly believes that allowing trucks of up to 100,000 pounds on the Interstate in Maine would promote safety for our citizens by keeping them on the major highways and away from small towns, schools, and homes. This change would also reduce the highway maintenance costs in Maine because the Interstate, unlike the secondary roads in Maine, are more durable and are built to accommodate heavy vehicles.

Studies have shown that if the weight limit on the Interstate were changed to 100,000 pounds, Maine would see fewer crashes each year, and would also save between \$1.7 and \$2.3 million in reduced pavement repair.

Over the years, Mike has introduced bills that would give Maine a waiver from federal weight limits and allow 100,000 pound trucks on I-95. He is also currently working with the Committee on ways that they can move forward on this issue in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization bill. [Click here](#) for more information on Mike's new truck weight bill, the Safe and Efficient Transportation Act of 2009 (H.R. 1799).

Despite some progress, some in Congress remain strongly opposed to any changes in truck weight standards anywhere in the US. Mike continues to work hard to educate other Members of Congress and to build consensus on the need to address this issue. He was successful in securing a Highways and Transit Subcommittee hearing on truck weights on July 9, 2008. The Maine Department of Transportation Commissioner testified before the subcommittee on behalf of the State of Maine's request to exempt the remainder of its Interstate System from federal truck weights so that it is consistent with state weight limits.

Recently, the U.S. Congress passed a one-year pilot project allowing 100,000 pound trucks on the entirety of the Maine Interstate System. Despite significant opposition in the House of Representatives, Mike worked with the Chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and Chairman of the Appropriations Committee to ensure that the pilot program was not stripped from the final version of the legislation. Letters communicating Mike's support for the pilot program can be found [here](#).

Unfortunately, the pilot program will expire by the end of 2010 without further action by the U.S. Congress. Mike will continue to work hard to inform other Members of Congress on the problems caused by disparities between federal and state truck weight limits and the need for a permanent solution in Maine and the nation.

A map that helps illustrate the current truck weight inequity in Maine can be found by [clicking here](#).

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Oversight and Accountability: The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

During consideration of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (P.L. 111-5), Mike worked with the T&I Committee to make significant contributions to strengthen the legislation. Oversight of the Recovery Act was and continues to be a high priority for the Committee. The T&I Committee held a total of 13 oversight hearings on the Recovery Act through the end of 2009, questioning 103 witnesses over a span of 54 hours. The Committee also collected data from state and federal agencies on the use of Recovery Act funds and published monthly reports on those figures.

As of November 30, 2009, Maine became the first state to fully commit funding provided under the Recovery Act for highway and bridge projects. According to the T&I Committee, these funds created or saved 2,910 full-time jobs while generating infrastructure improvements that will benefit economic development efforts throughout Maine for years to come. A full list of Maine highway and bridge projects that were funded through the Recovery Act can be found by going [here](#) and clicking on the "PROJECT LIST" tab.

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Transportation and Infrastructure Committee - Highlights of the 110th and 111th Congress

In the first session of the 111th Congress, the T&I Committee moved 68 bills and resolutions through the full House of Representatives. The following are among the key pieces of T&I Committee legislation passed by the House and transmitted to the Senate:

- H.R. 915, the Federal Aviation Administration Authorization Act of 2009;
- H.R. 1062, the Water Quality Investment Act of 2009;
- H.R. 3619, the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010;
- H.R. 3371, the Airline Safety and Pilot Training Act of 2009;
- H.R. 1746, the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Act of 2009;
- H.R. 1665, the Coast Guard Acquisition Reform Act of 2009;
- H.R. 2093, the Clean Coastal Environment and Public Health Act of 2009;
- H.R. 2651, the Maritime Workforce Development Act;
- H.R. 3360, the Cruise Vessel Safety Act of 2009; and
- H.R. 1700, the National Women's History Museum Act of 2009

During the 110th Congress and the first full session of the 111th Congress, the T&I Committee invited 1,841 witnesses to testify during 257 separate hearings on a wide range of issues. [Click here](#) for a comprehensive list of hearing subjects.

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